794 852 the Komo's blessings, the Komo's blessing is with him; let him join the men, let his light be with us" (1). The child is then presented in

1. De dyira la tyę gundo la; ani komo ye dukaw mine nuofe, komo ka barka bi a fe; kɛ fara tyew ka, ka yele kę an ta ye.

the same way to its grandmother.

794 These acts anticipate the initiation which later will make the newborn an adolescent member of the Komo society.

794 561 [564] In each village this society is composed of all initiated men, divided into age grades, which are themselves composed, theoretically, of the men circumcised in the same year. Only the griot are not admitted. It is permissible for an individual who has not been initiated immediately after his circumcision to be admitted later if the society agrees. He will belong, regardless of his age, to the age grade with which he will have been initiated.

One age grade has precedence over the other which follows. This hierarchical order is followed strictly in daily life as well as during councils and ceremonies. To break these rules of seniority would mean to disturb the order even in the hereafter, since the Komo gathers together the sum total of both living and dead members.

794 [735] The recruitment of members varies from one region to another because of the expenses involved in the admission ceremony and in participation in the ritual. Some villagers refrain from joining because of poverty, and it also happens that some conversions to Islam are brought about by this fact.

/155/ The initiation is performed at night. The kotigi (2) presents

2. See p. 156.

to the future members, one by one, the ancestors' tools. He explains to them their origin, their history, their role, and their spiritual value. He teaches them the respect they owe the ancestors for their courage, their labors, and the technological inventions of which they were either initiators or guardians. The mask is removed from its shelter and dressed by a member; in front of the children the man who wears it unmasks himself and reveals to them the meaning of the different parts of the costume.

763 deceased in case he had been killed by a genie (nyana). Sacri-
764 fices, alms, or the payment of a fine are necessary in that event, along with intervention by the priest of the nyana in question.

764 Most often, the body is turned over to a priest (nyana-n-tigi) [167] if the deceased was a member of a brotherhood.

[735] In any event, it is customary to give alms at the crossroads near the village.

768 Further, the death of the fa puts an end (1) to the au-
357

1. When a king of Kaarta died, the interruption in sovereignty often gave rise to serious anarchic disturbances.

thority held by him, and this may have serious consequences, since for the moment everyone is virtually independent. That is why the servitor who had the master's confidence and who actually ran the establishment retains his role after taking certain precautions (2). In particular he must make sure that the

2. This was the role that Ngolo Dyâra was seeking when he asked to be placed as "guard at the master's door."

movable property of the deceased is not carried off. He is familiar with these things, and he is the guardian responsible for them. He makes the women return the gold jewelry and valuable fabrics, puts everything in a safe place, and makes an inventory in the presence of the heir presumptive.

764 (b) Burial. The deceased may be buried in the ground within his hut or at least in a corner of his establishment. In former times there was a cemetery outside the village, often near the grove of the nyana dugu-da-siri (guardian genie of the village), and in such cases it was apparent that the more important the deceased, the nearer his tomb to the sacred place.

766 For persons of distinction there is usually a special kind
764 of grave. It is about two meters long, and while the opening

764 574 Theoretically, all of this is supposed to be used to honor the dead, which is done in several ways. In the first place, it is obligatory to serve food and particularly drink to anyone who comes to present condolences. These meals and drinking bouts are a kind of communion since from everything consumed an offering is first made to the deceased and also [769] to the ancestors whom he has gone to join; it is a kind of communion with the departed members of the family.

These repasts and drinking bouts tend to develop into orgies, and the inexperienced or casual observer may think that they are carousals at the expense of the deceased. As a matter of fact, however, far from suffering a loss, the family of important persons receives more than it spends, at least for the time being (2). The more lavish the celebration, the more it is supposed to please the deceased and cause him to look favorably on his survivors.

2. The family will have to behave reciprocally toward the families who have thus shown their respect when deaths later occur among them.

764 735 In principle, everything not consumed is supposed to be given away as alms to the poor and not added to the family property. It is quite natural, therefore, that the poor of the village come to partake of the feast, and indeed, they are invited. They must be treated with much cordiality if the sentiment governing the feast conforms to the spirit of the custom. That is why the [171] chronicle tells of Nyana-n-koro, upon the death of Ngolo, claiming that the cowries given should be distributed to the poor, to travelers, and to all the needy; that is the true spirit of the custom, and that type of alms is particularly pleasing to the dead.

The funeral feasting continues for seven days, which are called dyansa, "alms." It is a time especially devoted to [537] condolences, called sanga-fo (1) "funerary discourse." The

1. Literally, "sayings (for the sake) of the dead."

621 various reasons. Thus, the dugu-tigi in council can invoke
622 police powers to maintain order in the community and even act
692 as a tribunal to punish those whose misdeeds in any way endanger the persons or property of members of the community.

621 Since the genie is expected to ensure the prosperity of
622 the faithful, it is the duty of the dugu-tigi to come to the assist-
● [735] ance of members of the community who are unfortunate or indigent.

He must also maintain the relations of his community with the outside world, that is, with neighboring territorial communities and all other groupings, analogous or otherwise. He can act independently only in matters which we call purely administrative; for other matters he must have the assent of the council of fa, above all for any matter involving the disposal of community property.

621 It is obvious that all the roles of the dugu-tigi involve
622 expenses that are often considerable, but for this purpose he has
651 access to goods from many sources. In the first place, offerings made to the nyana are of various kinds; they are not always consumable, and even if they are, they are usually consumed only in part. The remainder belongs to the dugu-tigi. It is customary to give bunya (gifts of homage) to the dugu-tigi on many occasions: a hunt, a fishing expedition, millet harvest, etc.; to thank him for an allotment of land, or for some other service. Community property is farmed out for fees payable at fixed times, and tribute is paid in the same way. Most of the various kinds of infractions committed within the community are punished by fines received by the dugu-tigi. Incorrigible malefactors become slaves of the community, and the produce of their labors [233] goes to the dugu-tigi. Anything found abandoned on land belonging to the community is turned over to the dugu-tigi, in whole or in part.

In case of need arising through some exceptional emergency (war, an expedition, public works of various kinds, etc.), the dugu-tigi may have recourse to what we should call an emergency assessment, i.e., he may ask the members of the community for special contributions for the purpose.

689 Public violation of decency is punished by death.

684 For adultery, the man is put in irons and pays a fine, the woman is whipped by her husband, her brothers, or the Fama's police. Relations with a woman in mourning draws public scorn on the guilty, while a man who commits adultery with a pregnant woman is put to death. A captive who is the lover of his master's wife is put to death.

689 Vagrant individuals are presumed to be escaped captives and are handed over to the Fama.

735 Finally, begging is authorized, because, say the Bambara, it is better to have begging than stealing.

d. Responsibility

[608] The Fama judges all his subjects, except his own sénanku whom he has judged by his tribunal. The law is applicable to every cir-
672 cumcised man and excised woman recognized as sane. (The demented are put in irons.) They are responsible for their acts, but the family of the guilty is also responsible. The father of an uncircumcised boy is responsible for the boy's acts, the husband for the acts of his wife, and we have seen that a man's crime may lead to the punishment of his whole family. Let us further remark that a
567 master was judge of his slave, but when a difference arose between
592 slaves of different houses, their case was referred to the tribunal. The tribunal also weighed the death penalty [72] when a slave com-
[609] mitted a grave fault. Finally, the foreigner who lives in the Bambara country is judged by Bambara laws.

672 We must also note that the penalties apply to all crimes committed voluntarily; every infraction or damage involuntarily committed is excusable on the condition that it be immediately confessed. Thus it is that a hunter meeting a pair of lovers in the
[684] bush may kill them for outraging public decency, but must admit his crime immediately upon returning to the village.

e. Inheritance

428 Monteil has noticed an order of succession in the Ségou region which does not correspond to that described by other authors, such as Ortoli or Aubert. In fact, at the death of the fa, " ... everything that belonged to him remains undivided under the new faya of

Chapter 6

Worship, Celebrations, Saraka, Sacrifices, and Dances in Honor of the Gnéna

1. The First Two Groups of Gnéna

781 776 The fundamental bases of all Bambara devotions are first, and above all, fear and secondly, the desire to have everything without effort or work. The Bambara respect a strong, powerful being because it can punish and reward, and since their fetishes are not equal in power, they take care not to honor all equally.

776 782 852 The genii of the first two groups have no priest or official minister, and public, solemn sacrifices are offered them very rarely. In the dry season, however, some festivals are held in their honor. The chief participants are children, who on these days stuff themselves with /millet/ flour mixed with honey water and milk, and with sorghum cakes. When they are full they take the leftovers outside the village to a place where paths cross, and many hens, dogs, and other animals come for the booty. The poor and unfortunate also come, for they, too, may take their share; every saraka (1) belongs to them. [735]

1. Tax, tribute, alms.

776 852 Little girls and boys take part in these festivals, but there is a special one for unexcised girls, and those who are soon to be excised and are getting ready for this great event in Bambara life bear /106/ all the expenses. It is the celebration of soli basi k'li (1), of which I will speak at greater length in my chapter on circumcision.

1. Soli, "young firls who will soon be excised"; basi, a kind of couscous with very small grains which distantly resembles semolina; k'li, "obtained by singing and clapping hands."